23 March 1981

STATINTL   MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Processing

FROM:

Deputy Director of Data Processing

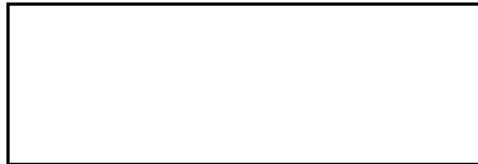SUBJECT: Reliability of ODP Computer Services.

1. As you make preparations for the upcoming short-run planning conference I would ask that you consider the question of reliability of ODP computer services as an input to the process.

2. You can take justifiable pride in the complex of equipment and software systems that has been drawn together in the Ruffing and Special Centers. Our ability to support evergrowing workloads on all major services attests to that. However, our vulnerability during outages grows more acute as the number of people who are dependent upon our services increases each year as inevitably it must.

3. It is my observation that the ODP complex "gets sick" on a periodic basis and a kind of malaise settles in on all major services, the major symptom of which is poor performance across the board. We are now and have been in such a malaise for several weeks. An examination of the Engineering Division System Availability Report confirms this. But even more importantly, the historical data from Engineering shows a very definite cyclical trend in availability levels on virtually all our services. I believe that our past perceptions of why availability falls are due for careful reexamination. It is much too easy, and indeed inappropriate, to jump at the poor reliability of a particular brand of disk drive or even worse blame it on essential operating systems upgrades. On the other hand, I am not as willing to accept the conventional wisdom surrounding explanations of the past, e.g., operating systems are so complex you must expect disruption in service when new ones are introduced, or this is the price paid for a multiplicity of vendors.

4. I ask that you look at the underlying causes for the cyclical behavior of availability and address measures in your planning process that have as their goal the smoothing out of availability at the highest practicable levels on all major systems.

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